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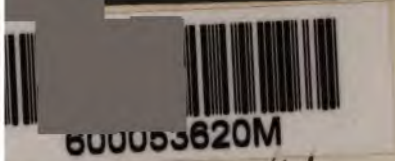
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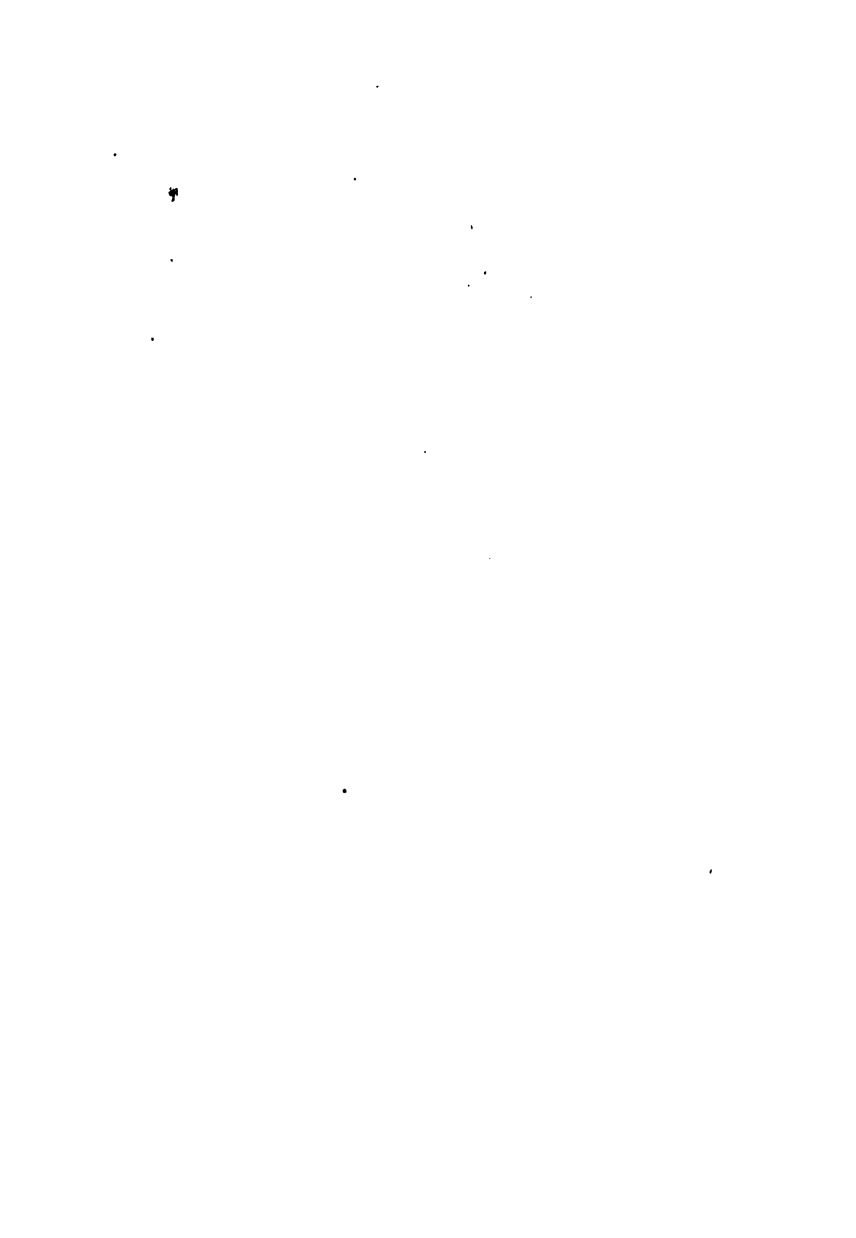


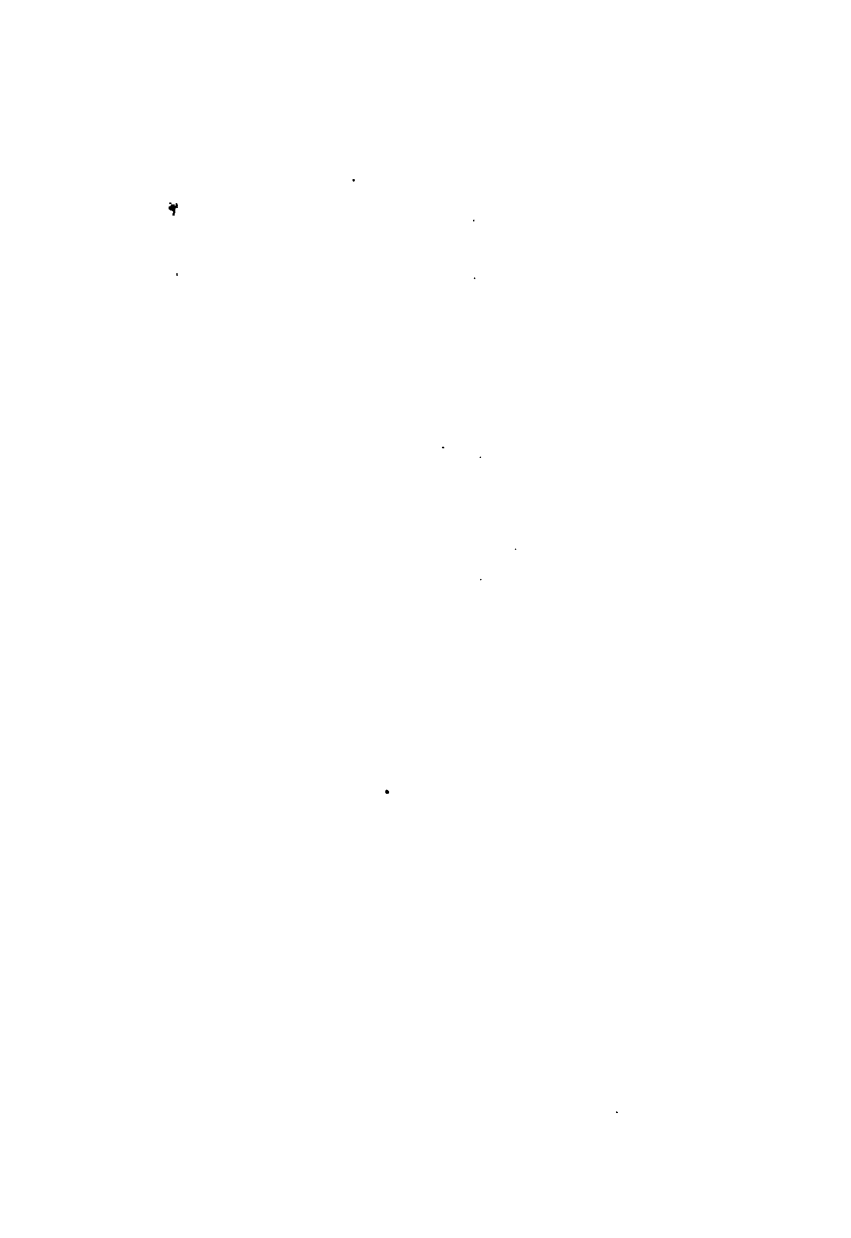
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Richard Rolph.

THE
LIFE
OF
RICHARD ROLPH,
THE
BLIND PEASANT OF LAKENHEATH,
NEAR MILDENHALL, SUFFOLK.

COMPOSED BY HIMSELF

Fourth Edition.

ENTERED STATIONERS' HALL.

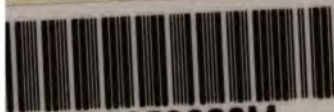


1841.

BURY ST. EDMUND'S:
PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR BY R. J. PECHEY.

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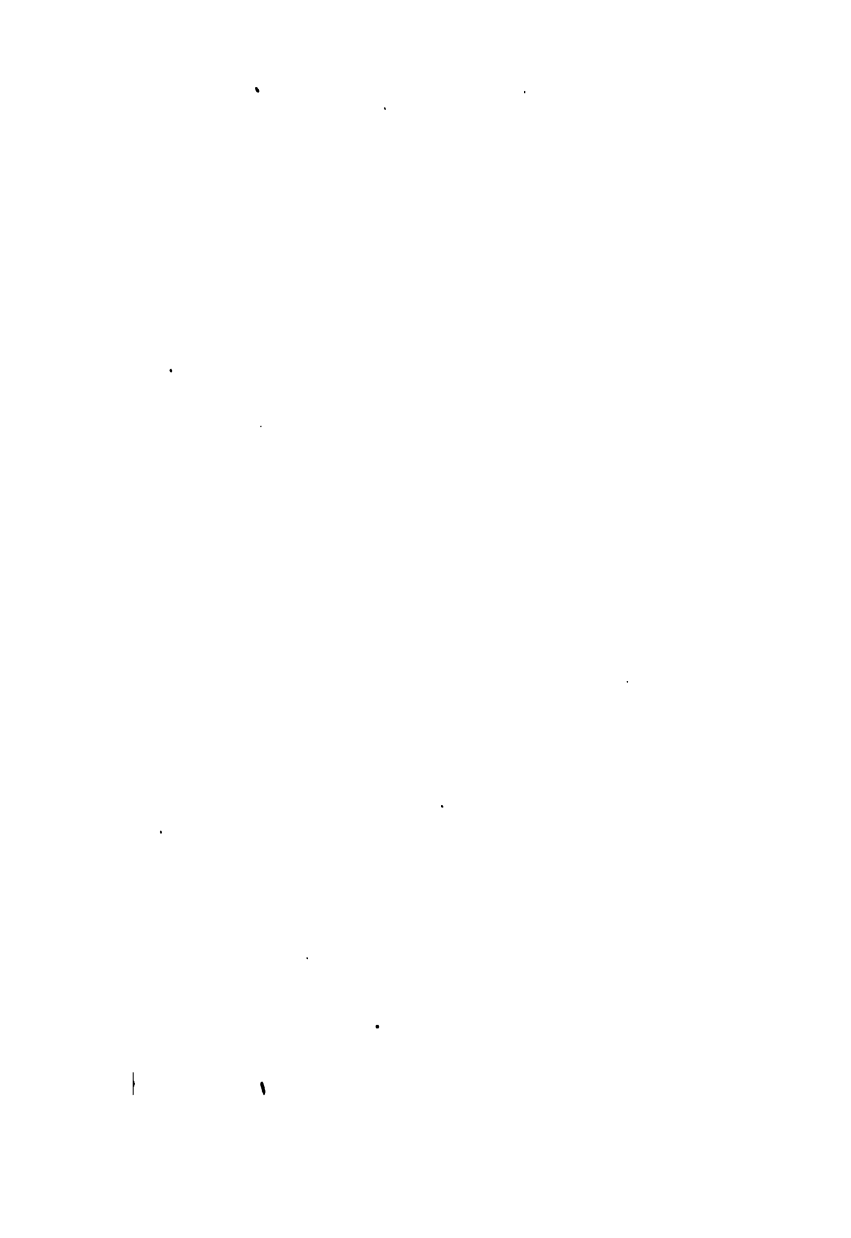


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ADVERTISEMENT.

I am a humble Peasant-Author, and feel no vanity in telling my friends and the public what I have been, what I have suffered, and what I have enjoyed. I was strongly urged to publish this book, and assisted by kind friends, who prepared it for the press, I have sold THREE Editions.

To all who have patronized me, I feel myself under obligation, but especially to several Ministers of the Gospel, who have interested themselves in the sale of my book, and have thus afforded me comfort under a distressing privation.

Grateful for past kindness to me, as an afflicted child of Providence, I humbly and respectfully solicit public patronage and encouragement to this FOURTH Edition, that the dreary dispensation of *total darkness*, may be mitigated and cheered, by continued sympathy and benevolence.

Lakenheath, 1841.

R. R.

Having known this "afflicted child of Providence," from his earlist years to the present time, and feeling desirous—as every christian must feel—to minister to his relief and comfort, I have at his urgent request, revised these pages, in the humble hope, that by the blessing of God, they may be productive of benefit to him and to the reader.

J. GATHERCOLE,

June, 1841.

Bury St. Edmund's.

RECOMMENDATION.

Vicarage House,

Kings Langley, Herts.

Nov. 20, 1840.

RICHARD ROLPH,

I am very glad that you have writton to me, and thank you for your very interesting publications, which not only do you great credit, but are likewise calculated to do a great deal of good. I will most readily consent to my name being added to your list of subscribers, (Rev. J. W. Butt, M. A. Vicar of Lakenheath.) Ten Copies. And if you can point out any other way, in which I can serve you, if in my power, I will do it. I earnestly pray the blessing of God, upon you, and your family, and am

Your Friend and Well-wisher,

J. W. BUTT.

Richard Rolph, the author of this work, is well known to me, and is, (as is his father, Andrew Rolph,) a most respectable man ; he is deserving in every way of the sympathy and encouragement of the well disposed, and this will at any time be testified by me, or my relation, Mr. Thomas Parrott, of Lakenheath.

W. P. CARTER,

Barrister,

4, Langford Place, St John's Wood,

London.

From information which I have received concerning Richard Rolph, I have reason to believe that he is one of the "household of faith," and that he has a wife and five children, depending for subsistence in a great measure upon the sale of these little books, I therefore add my name by way of recommendation, and shall be amply repaid if I can be instrumental in benefiting him by so doing.

J. F. SPARKE,
Baptist Minister,
Botesdale,
Suffolk.

May 13th, 1841.

The Rev. J. Cooke, Rev. J. Drake, and J. Fyson, Esq., Thetford; Rev. R. Bryant, Huntington; Rev. J. Ray, Cambridge; B. Primrose Esq., Mildenhall; Messrs. Pepworth, Brandon; Walden, Feltwell; Flatman, Downham; Bootman, Lynn; and J. Gathercole, Bury St. Edmund's, will give similar testimony if required.

Other recommendations may be seen in the Author's "Poetical Discourse."

THE
LIFE OF RICHARD ROLPH.

I was born at the village of Lakenheath, about six miles from Mildenhall, in the County of Suffolk, on the 8th of March, 1801.

My parents were poor but industrious, and early taught me to attend the House of God. Of the earliest part of my infancy, I have but little to say, that is interesting and worthy of record. At seven years of age, I was sent to a charity school; but being obliged to do something for my own subsistence, I was soon of necessity, taken away from it, and consequently learned but little.

About this time a Wesleyan Sunday School, being established in the village, I attended, and made a little progress in reading; but as I continued there a few months only, I learned but little. While under the care and instructions of my school teachers, some faint rays of heavenly light shone upon me, but they were "as a morning cloud, and as the early dew,

which soon goeth away,"—scarcely seen till they had vanished. Evil companions, corrupt society, and a depraved nature, held me in deepest darkness. At this period my daily occupation was chiefly with the bircklayers, whose business I had the opportunity of learning to some advantage. At seventeen years of age, I received Journeyman's wages from my Master, and having a good supply of money, began to seek pleasure at every opportunity. Alas! how foolish and full of vanity are many of our actions. Dissipation was my joy. I fancied the cup I drank was pure and sweet. Charming seemed the prospect of carnal happiness that opened on my view. I thought not of the transitoriness of sublunary things. I loved and pursued the vanities of the world, as if they would endure for ever. I never troubled myself with the thought that for all my misdoings, I should have to give an account at that awful day, when God will judge the world in righteousness. At this time I learned to play the flute. I frequently attended music-rooms, where I enjoyed, as I fancied, the most gratifying felicity, especially at Fordham, where I practised with Mr. Bishop, his son William, and others.

In August, 1821, disease began to manifest itself in my eyes, which ended in Gutta Serena. When at work for Sir H. E. Bunbury, Bart., on a building near Coppilaw, in the parish of Mildenhall, I was taken from the scaffold nearly blind. This severe calamity threw a dark, dark shade over my visionary prospects of pleasure. Dense clouds seemed to be gathering around me, that gave an aspect of horror to my future life. No words, no pen, can do justice to the

agony of my feelings. To loose my precious sight.—O ye who enjoy this blessing, cannot conceive the anguish of my heart, at the prospect of a life to be spent in midnight darkness! O the horror that crowded upon me on taking, as it were a long, a last farewell of that bright orb which rules the day! I could indeed, still feel his influence; but what was that to the glorious scenes which the light of day unfolded? Never more to see the bright blue sky—the rich and verdant fields, the hills—the valleys; never more to behold my friends, (though I might shake them by the hand, or hear the music of their voices,) filled me with unutterable distress.

A medical Gentleman, distinguished for his kindness and benevolence, pitying my condition, took me before Mr. John Caldecott, Physician, then in our village; and they both attended me gratuitously. I was afterwards taken by Mr. Bangs, the former Gentleman, before J. S. Futter, Esq., of Undley Hall, recommended to a friend, and taken to an Hospital in London. And here with the liveliest gratitude and pleasure, I record the generosity of the inhabitants of my native village, by which I was kindly assisted, in my journey. I was kindly received by —Woodard, Esq., of Stratford, to whom I was recommended.

As soon as I arrived at his mansion, I was examined by several medical gentlemen. Next day, I was taken before Sir W. Blizzard, and my disorder was declared by him very unpromising. I was also taken before the celebrated surgeon Travis, and placed under his care, in

St. Thoma's Hospital, George's ward, No. 26, October 5th, 1821. I received the best attention. My case however appeared quite incurable, and I was therefore, desired to return back into the country, after having been under the surgeon three months. Melancholy indeed was my case at that time. The lamp of hope, that gilds and illumines the bosom, even when sinking under sorrow, or contending with almost insurmountable difficulties, could scarcely shed a single ray within my breast. I had almost yielded to despair. However, I determined to go to the Eye Infirmary, Charterhouse Square where I was received, had my eyes examined, and a lecture delivered on the disorder for nearly an hour. My case to them appeared equally hopeless. They told me I had been under the most skillful of the faculty for the eye, and they could do no more. How could I bear up against this decision? Alas! what gloom covered my prospects! after this I was a little while under Dr. Primrose of Mildenhall, but all to no purpose. My disorder baffled all human skill. Truly distressing was my condition. Given up by all the medical Gentlemen I had been under, scarcely able to guide myself about, and without any resource but to fly to the parish, what must the reader think was my state of mind? I sorrowed so much over my gloomy condition, that my rest departed from me for several weeks; but beyond all this, I was severely tempted by the arch-enemy of souls. I conceived I had committed the unpardonable *sin against the Holy Ghost*, and that the loss of

my sight was the first blast of God's indignation against me. O the distress of my soul! what language could depict it? I endeavoured to lay my case before God, but the heavens seemed as brass—or as a thick curtain spread out between my God and me. I became desperate—I thought myself cursed above all things living—I entertained the utmost hatred of every thing sacred, and concluded God was my vindictive enemy. I hated life and sought to destroy myself. Twice I attempted to commit the deed; but was prevented by the mercy of God. The last time I attempted it, was about midnight. I walked out barefooted lest any one should hear me. A little time before I came to the place where I intended to drown myself, I was suddenly alarmed by something which appeared to me, first like a whirlwind, then like a huge tree falling down before me, then I heard a sound like the roaring of some wild beast, which so alarmed me, that I almost fell down to the earth. As soon as I recovered myself, I returned home. But O the anguish of my soul! I appeared as if possessed with devils, who reproached me with cowardice, and almost prompted me to attempt on doing it again.

But next day, I was providentially led into a good man's house, who being alone, stated that he had been much troubled about me for several days, and that he knew I was more than commonly tried and tempted, which I at first denied, but being sorely pressed, I with a flood of tears, made a full confession. That good man wept. He thanked God for my preservation. He also

prayed with me, and not without effect. The tempter fled, and heaven opened to my view. Rejoicing in spirit I went home, and was glad to find my appetite and natural rest return as formerly. I could again with pleasure listen to the sound of the gospel. But alas! all this was of short duration. My young companions and neighbours, subscribed amongst themselves and bought me a violin. A respectable man offered to teach me gratuitously, which offer, by persuasion, I accepted, thinking it was an innocent amusement. O this innocent delusion! it led me into a thousand dangers. The first week I could partly play three tunes, which pleased me much. I usually practised from five in the morning until ten at night.

As soon as I was able to play a few tunes, I was requested to play at a country dance, where my performance pleased so well, that I soon gained a considerable celebrity for my musical abilities. In every village and town for miles around, my name and powers became well known. I soon took up the trade of an itinerant minstrel—playing at fairs, feasts, balls, plays, weddings, hawkkeys, cockfights, &c.,—my brother going with me, to lead me, and to accompany me, (when playing,) on the tamarine.

In January, 1827, I went to Thetford, where I was attended one month gratuitously by Dr. Baily, who did all he could for me, but without effect. It is but justice, however, to that Gentleman, to record my grateful acknowledgment of his kind endeavours to do me good. I returned home, and confess with grief, I continued

to pursue a course of wicked dissipation. Continually in bad company, I learned their ways, and practised their conduct. A confirmed drunkard, and a loose profane talker, I cared not for the state of my soul, either in time or eternity, scarcely did I retire to rest sober.

I became a Sabbath-breaker, selling shrimps, oysters, and other shell fish, on that sacred day. In 1828, I associated with infidels and bad men; soon inbibed their principles; and was almost persuaded to believe the Bible, a political rote-book,—the invention of men. Still, however, my conscience felt such severe twitchings, when questions arose relative to the authenticity of that blessed book, that I never dared to believe it “a cunningly devised fable.” And the more I became acquainted with the evidence, in proof that the Bible is a revelation from God, the more I am convinced, “it is given by inspiration of God,” and is able to make men “wise unto Salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” Having in vain essayed to quench conviction, by drinking deeper in wickedness, I was awakened by Almighty God, of his great mercy and goodness, from the slumber of sin and became deeply concerned to “flee from the wrath to come.”

On the night of April, 19th, 1829, as well as I remember, I had an alarming dream* which

* It is worthy of notice here, and is has been remarked by many, that the scene of this dream, a wide open field was enclosed in 1834, and the year following, on the very spot on which I stood, a commodious Wesleyan Chapel was built, twenty-seven feet by thirty-five, with ten noble windows.

made a deep impression upon my mind.* By such as have felt the first awakening of the soul to a sense of its state, if they have led a similar life to mine, some conception may be formed of my distress. I knew I had broken God's law, and I felt myself a guilty sinner. I was ashamed to go to the house of God, because I had lived in such open rebellion against Him, and I dreaded the jeers of my wicked companions. I thought I would break off my sinful practices, that I might become more fit to attend, and then I thought if I did, I should bring my wife and family to want, as I had no other means of supporting them. Besides I had promised to be at several places of amusement, which I had been accustomed to attend. To these I went with great reluctance, arming myself with a strong resolution to resist the temptations to which I should be exposed. Thus I went on for several weeks, endeavouring to avoid intoxicating liquors, and suffering the pangs of a guilty conscience. Often when playing to a company, I have walked out and wept, and returned to my place again. Sometimes I felt disposed to break my violin to pieces; at others, I endeavoured to offend the company, that they might discharge me, but all to no purpose. I then broke my strings wilfully, in hopes I should put an end to the revelry, but I was immediately supplied with new ones. Foiled in these attempts, I then tried others, such as leaving the company in the midst of their dancing, and concealing myself

* See this dream in verse at the end of the Narrative.

from them, but I was soon sought out and induced to return. I was urged to drink, and told I had till lately been good company, and that I should not come to any hurt. Sometimes I thought, I might be taken wrong views of my temporal circumstances and prospects; but such thoughts were soon dissipated. While the young and giddy were enjoying their false pleasure, I was suffering the lashings of a guilty conscience. I considered myself an instrument in the hands of Satan of sending souls to Hell. I often feared and trembled, by night and by day, that I should die suddenly; be summoned into the presence of my offended Judge; and be doomed to the vengeance of eternal misery.

It pleased God, however, of his infinite mercy, to enable me to decide on seeking the salvation of my soul. I was convinced that it was better to want bread in the short day of time, than to want water, through the rolling ages of eternity. At all risks, I was determined to serve God, and that if I did perish, I would perish at the foot of the cross. With this determination, I retired into my chamber, weighed down and trembling under my load of guilt. Deeply ashamed of my sins, I cried to God, to have mercy upon me, through Jesus Christ, and speedily to make a way for my escape, from the wretched state in which I lived. After much wrestling with God, I was, at length, enabled to believe he would have mercy upon me. But the "enemy" soon assailed me with temptation; he would fain have advised me to return to my old haunts, and

live as I formerly had done in his service. He suggested to my mind, that I should make but a sorry Christian ; that I was so wicked, no one would believe me ; that religion was for those *only*, whom the Lord pleased ; that I never could become religious, as I had failed in every thing I had taken in hand, for the last eighteen months ; that I had now taken the wrong step, and committed the greatest sin, by desiring God to afflict me for my salvation ; and that I should be a cause of much reproach upon religion, and much evil amongst my fellow worshippers. With such suggestions as these my mind was greatly harrassed. But I was enabled to resist temptations, and hold on my way. To avoid, however, bringing reproach on the church, I made a vow to withhold myself for the space of two years, (if spared so long,) from joining any section of it. But though my motive seemed to me to be good, my vow was *rash*, and not to be *commended*. I conversed with no one on the subject, but as soon as an opportunity presented itself, I attended the house of God, though with much trembling and confusion, thinking every one's eye, and particularly the preacher's, would be upon me. I thought, also, that remarks would be made upon me, which I found to be the case. As I was returning home, I heard some of the people say : " the fiddler has been at the chapel " as if my attendance had in it something marvellous. But blessed be God, my fetters were broken, and feeling the liberty of the gospel, I sought for further blessings in all the means of grace. I secluded myself, as well

as I was able, from all company, for several weeks, delighting only in the hours of worship, in the house of God. But my trials increased. My former companions learned that I should soon become a Methodist. They endeavoured therefore, to draw me from the house of God, and, being near Christmas, to engage me in my former avocation. They were afraid they should lose their fiddler, as they had no other in the village. They did all they could to prevent me attending the chapel. But it was my constant practise to seek for strength from on high—to solicit God, for supporting grace under my severe trials. The parties who assembled according to their usual custom, at this season of the year, at the Bell Inn, Lakenheath, sent for me, but I refused to attend. Two or three were deputed to fetch me, who urged the advantage it would be to me, but by the grace of God, they were unable to shake my determination. I refused to go. They went away in a rage, abusing me and saying, had they known how they would have been served by me, they would not have assisted me in purchasing my violin. But nothing could induce me to return to my former mode of life.

In January, 1831, I became totally blind, which to me was a distressing affliction. I was still more severely tried by my old companions. Some of them, from a great distance, came with horse and cart for me, offering to pay me before I started, and suggesting many advantages from the journey; but being unable to move me, they departed in a rage, abused me, and declared

that I ought to want bread for refusing such offers. Sometimes parties would lay wagers, (or pretend so to do,) that I would come and play—and then offer me the amount of the wager, if I would only go and decide it. On one occasion, a young man who had shown me much kindness, and pretended to be deeply interested in my welfare, came to me, and hoped for once I would be a friend to him. He said he had laid a wager, and if I would go and decide it, he would give me ten shillings, promising I should be back in five minutes. The pretended wager was that I would not draw my bow across my violin at the public-house door. After much persuading, I consented to go. While at the door, my violin was taken from me, I was carried into the house and locked in, I was much vexed, and told them if I could have my fiddle, I would break it into a thousand pieces. Some held my hands behind me, while others placed the violin at my shoulder, drew the bow across the strings, and shouted we have broke the old fiddler in again. Thus they taunted me for some time. Others pretending to pity me, provided strong drink, hoping to make me drink to intoxication; but finding they could not prevail, they let me go. This deep scheme almost succeeded; but at last, to put an end to all these stratagems, I sold my violin, and ever since have sincerely thanked God for enabling me to act with so much firmness. Having thus frustrated their designs, they attempted to ridicule me out of religion, calling after me in the street, from the public-houses, as I passed, asking me where my fiddle was, and

if I were going to play to a friend, naming a member of the Wesleyan society, or as I went to the house of God, if I were going to play to the parson. These attacks, however, gave me opportunities of warning them "to flee from the wrath to come." My weak and feeble exhortations and warnings soon kept them at a distance and made them cease annoying me, so that, blessed be God, I was enabled to walk in peace, with my friends, to the house of God.

Having in early life, been a practitioner of vocal and instrumental music, in the Established church, I soon became acquainted with the singing at the Wesleyan chapel, and endeavoured in that respect to render myself useful.

Having a thirst for knowledge, I got any friend I could to read to me such books of instruction as came in my way, and endeavoured to understand them. Thomas King, a friend, who had much spare time, and was a lover of books, read to me frequently from six to eight hours a day. Among others he read to me, "The Bible," "The life of the Rev. J. Wesley," his Sermons and Magazines, "The life of Mr. Fletcher," his "Checks to Antinomianism," "Scripture Scales," and "Baxter's Saints Rest," his "Call to the Unconverted," &c., "Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress," "Holy War," also the lives and works of Benson, Stoner, Nelson, Hume, Allen, and other good men.

The reading of these works encouraged me "to press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The persons who read to me having no taste for poetry,

I had no opportunity of becoming acquainted with works of that kind. Many works of Natural History and Philosophy, "Josephus' History of the Jews," "The History of the Peninsular War," the "Young Man's book of Knowledge," "Count Buffon's Natural History," Voyages, Geography, &c., were read to me, from which I derived much knowledge of the divisions of the earth, of mankind, of the manners and customs of different parts of the world, and of the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms. The more I knew, the more my bosom glowed with gratitude to God, who though I was deprived of sight, had opened out to me, such treasures of enjoyment. Oh! that I could love Him more and serve Him better.

I felt thankful that I was born in Britain, and not in the Pope's dominions, nor amongst Mahometans, nor Idolators, but in a land where I may worship God according to the Bible, and my own conscience; that I am delivered from blindness of heart and mind; that I have been plucked as a brand from the burning; saved from going down to the pit, and made the possessor of a good hope of everlasting life.

The time of my vow having expired, I still hesitated to join myself professedly to the Wesleyan society, though what I saw in my dream was ever haunting me, and seemed to induce me to join it. Up to this time, I had not communicated to any one, the state of my mind. In December, 1832, the Rev. P. C. Horton was appointed to preach in our chapel. The day before the preaching, my mind was much affected respect-

ing my eternal state, the promises I had made, and the goodness of God towards me. The service commenced with great solemnity, the preaching appeared to be directed to no one except myself, for it brought to my mind all that ever I did, and compelled me to see that I must attend to the salvation of my soul, or be lost for ever. It is impossible for me to describe the feelings of my mind, but suffice it to say, I was deeply convinced of sin. The text like a two-edged sword, prepared for the very purpose, was, "These three years, I came seeking fruit and found none, cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground," &c., was suited to me a barren fig-tree indeed. While he explained the latter clause thus, spare that sinner another year, till I shall dig about him, I felt encouraged. At the close of the meeting, while we were on our knees, the preacher left the pulpit, and was in the aisle, entreating the people "to flee from the wrath to come." He fixed himself where I was, so that I could not shun him, and entreated me strongly to close in with the overtures of God's mercy, but I held my peace and got out. My mind being now overcharged, I could keep these things no longer, so I related the whole to an old friend, Mr. W. Gathercole, who had been a member of the Wesleyan society upwards of twenty-four years, but I obtained no relief; my wounds, if possible, were made deeper. Many others, about this time, being desirous of salvation, the Rev. J. Willis, superintendent of the Circuit, arranged that a new class should be raised, of which Mr. Halls, was appointed leader

and to which I was invited. I rejoiced, when I heard such provision was made, to promote the spiritual interests of my fellow creatures, but I could not avail myself of it, as I had imbibed a notion that I must be made better before I was fit to unite with a religious society. This feeling had been upon my mind, for more than three years, during which time I had endeavoured to break of my sins. Thus I went on, sinning and repenting, weeping and mourning in secret places. But in all these things, I found myself no better. I was a stranger to the plan of salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus. Nor did I know the blessed effects of Christian communion. When I heard, therefore, that my name was put down with others, who were to meet, I became very uneasy. I thought, if my friends and the Rev. Mr. Willis knew what a sinner I was, I should not be desired to join them. Mr. W. Gathercole, encouraged me to trust in the Lord for mercy and deliverance; but I saw and felt so much of my sin and wickedness, that I dreaded the time of meeting, as I thought I should bring much reproach on religion, however, I decided upon meeting once, and laying my case before the leader, which I did on January 13th, 1833, with much trembling and a soul burthened with guilt. He thanked God on my account; wished there were thousands like me; as I was not far from the kingdom, and the Saviour "came to seek and to save them that are lost." He explained the nature of faith, and pointed me to the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." I felt much encouraged to renounce

my selfdependence, and rely solely upon the merits of Christ for salvation. I was much assisted by the pious friendship of Mr. J. Morley, one of my class-mates, with whom I often met for religious conversation and prayer, that we might strengthen each other's hand in the Lord. He was earnestly seeking salvation; and, relying on the Atonement, was soon enabled to testify, that God had power on earth to forgive sins. But his happiness greatly increased *my* trouble of mind, as I began to fear—the blessing being delayed, that I should after all become a “cast-away.”

At the latter end of February, I attended my class; my load of sin was intolerable; too heavy to be borne; so that language fails to describe the anguish of my soul. My Leader insisted upon the necessity of the new birth, in order to become a Christian. I felt determined, therefore, if I perished, I would perish at the foot of the cross, calling upon the name of the Lord. While praying, at the close of the meeting, Christ was evidently set before me as my Saviour, and by the grace of God, I was able to believe, to the salvation of my soul! What love I felt shed abroad in my heart! My load was gone. I enjoyed the liberty of God's children; I could “rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.”

The world and all things appeared new. I could claim all the promises, and go on my way rejoicing. But I soon found fresh trials. Family prayer, though I felt it to be my duty, was a heavy cross. I put it off, from time to time,

thinking in the morning, I would engage in the evening, and in the evening, I would in the morning. At my first attempt I was much distressed. Satan appeared to triumph over me, till these words were applied to my mind: "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, though I fall, yet shall I arise again." I had many other trials; but I found as my day, so was my strength. On July 17th, 1833, the Lord, in mercy, called my friend J. M. to himself, which to me was a season of great solemnity. The Lord still continued his blessing upon us. In our Sunday morning Prayer-meeting, he was especially mindful of us, and blessed us. Our souls were filled, unutterably full of glory and of God, and this baptism of the Spirit we retained for some time. I felt so happy, that I thought I should never again be in bondage.

Since that time, however, I have had to pass through many dark days, and deep waters; but hitherto I have found the Lord to be my helper in the time of trouble, that "religion's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are paths of peace." I endeavoured to take up my cross, to acknowledge the Saviour before men, and to glorify him with my body and soul, which I felt, was only my reasonable service. But I was not permitted to go on in the calm possession of religion. I was soon tempted to believe, that what I felt was only the work of imagination, that I had joined myself to the people of God, prayed before the congregation, made a profession of religion without having felt its power, and that such delusion and hypocrisy would in-

crease my condemnation. I resolved, therefore, upon leaving the people, and desired a friend to give my Leader the reason of my conduct. My friend, however, would not allow me to neglect the means of grace, so that blessed be the name of the Lord, the snare was soon broken, and my liberated soul enabled to rejoice in the way of peace. In this ordeal, I learned, that I was no longer secure, than while I was kept by the grace of God ; and that from him cometh all my help. I might here mention many happy seasons ; but must pass on, by saying, that twice in that year I was conducted to a Love-feast at Beck-Row, where, though the fear of man was a snare to me, I enjoyed much of the love of God. On February the 6th, 1834, I was conducted to a Social-meeting held at Mr. Pepworth's, Weeton, near Brandon. Nearly one hundred friends were assembled ; and I found it good to be there ; for several were set at liberty, and I was enabled for the first time, publicly, to speak of the goodness of God. Many wept. I related the remarkable dream I had four years, nine months, and seventeen days before, and, to my surprise, as soon as the meeting concluded, I was desired by several friends to have it written out, that it might be the means of doing good to others. Till then I had no idea of publishing, for before I became a member of the Wesleyan Society, I had kept it secret, and I even thought it impossible, being stone blind and illiterate. But willing to do good, if I could, I gave my mind to meditation, endeavouring to understand the meaning of every sentence I heard, that I might

do something in that way. Early one morning as I was meditating on the state of sanctification, these words spontaneously arose in my mind :

Arise my soul that I may find,
 (For I want all my sins forgiven,)
 That Christ may dwell within my mind,
 A happy antepast of Heaven.

At the first repeating of these words, I felt as if I had found a prize. I repeated them over and over again, counting the number of syllables in each line, which I found correct and equal, still I was ignorant whether they were my own or not. But as soon as my friends were stirring, I got them to search the Wesleyan Hymn Book, but could find no such lines therein, so I concluded they must be my own. I got them also to count the syllables in each line, and they also found them equal. Strange as it may seem, it is nevertheless true, that although I had practised singing in the Church, and played on different musical instruments for a number of years, yet I never understood what constituted the different metres till that morning, the 14th March, 1834. Encouraged by the discovery of this feeble talent, I proceeded with verse after verse, till I had composed several pieces, some of which were of considerable length. As soon as I acquainted Thomas King, he offered to take them down in writing—though he confessed he knew nothing about poetry. I composed pieces on scripture subjects, as they struck my mind. My simple

rule of marking the different metres was the following :

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Al-migh-ty God bow down thine ear,

1 2 3 4 5 6
And hark-en to my wants ;

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
As-sist me Lord by fer-vent pray'r,

1 2 3 4 5 6
To ut-ter my com-plaints.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Lord fill my soul with ho-ly fear,

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
O kin-dle in my heart a flame

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Of love, and quick-en my de-sire,

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
To hon-our and a-dore thy name.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Lord may this bless-ing now take place,

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
O let me see thy smil-ing face,

1 2 3 4 5 6
In bright-est lus-tre shine !

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
O may I through thy mer-cy show,

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
And tes-ti-fy to all be-low,

1 2 3 4 5 6
That I am ful-ly thine.

I was thus enabled to keep the metre on what-ever subject I composed, and worked my way

as well as I could, for I had no instruction. I had my dream written out, after which it went off my mind like a dying sound.

My father, S. Bangs, and R. Pepworth Jun. each took a part in writing out my poems, and thus preserved them for printing. In January, 1835, I, with W. G., was invited by a worthy and respectable friend, to Bury St. Edmund's and was received and entertained with every demonstration of friendliness, may the Lord reward him for it. Here we sat in heavenly places. I was conducted to a Social-meeting, held in a large room at Mrs. Newdick's; I felt it good to be there, and was again enabled to speak of the wonderful goodness of God towards me. At the close of the meeting, several friends advised me to have my experience committed to paper and published, as they thought it would be interesting to a number of people. Finding I had some of it written out, I was advised to leave that part with Mr. J. Gathercole, which I did. I composed many other poetical pieces, some of which are already published, and others are in the hands of a friend, (Mr. Graham,) the reviser and editor of the first impression of this work. While at Bury my mind was much enlarged by the pious conversation of my Christian friends. Fresh light shone upon me, and new desires sprung up in my soul, as Christ was set before me in the glory of his mediatorial character. I felt the communion of saints to be sweet; and that a day spent in the service of God, is better than a thousand elsewhere. I could rejoice in my Saviour. Never before did

Christianity appear so lovely, or a throne of grace so easy of access. I felt that "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up, with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint." The burthen of my song was

"If all the world my Saviour knew,
Then all the world would love him too."

I felt a burning charity divine—an intense longing for the Salvation of the world; and I was determined to devote my renewed strength to the glory of God, in setting forth his praise. I was encouraged by the enlarged views I received of christian privilege, to become a Christian "indeed, in whom there is no guile." The christian conduct of my friends at Bury was so encouraging, that I felt while with them, my soul growing up into Christ my living head, and lived in the enjoyment of blessings, so rich, that the remembrance of them will be lasting as Eternity.

At parting, we commended each other to God, and to the word of his grace, and truly the Lord was with us, and blessed us indeed. My friend, and I felt our hearts to burn within us, as by the way, we recounted the mercies we had enjoyed. On reaching home, my friends rejoiced to hear what God had done for me, and were much encouraged to seek for themselves higher attainments in the divine life. I became more anxious to maintain

my intercourse with God, and to rise into higher experience, and richer enjoyment. I attended the means of grace in the spirit of prayer, saw the liberty of the gospel, pressed into it, and experienced increasing happiness. I was enabled to resist temptation, to overcome the world, and to administer comfort to those that were ready to perish. I now saw the goodness of God in bringing me through such severe trials of mind, as I was thereby better able to point out Satan's devices, to shew the way of deliverance by pointing sinners to the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." I can refer to those seasons of deliverance, as special instances of the goodness of God to me, the remembrance of which is cheering to my mind, and often affords me strong consolation. I desire to adopt the language of the Psalmist, and say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

"Jesus all the day long,
Was my joy and my song,
Oh that all his Salvation might see;
He hath loved me I cried,
He hath suffered and died,
To redeem such a rebel as me."

In the fullness of my heart, I said, "what shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me; I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord, now in the presence of all his people."

In March, 1834, I began to compose hymns as I found my mind drawn out that way, and though I was not always in a poetical frame, yet the nearer I lived to the Lord, the more I found my mind expand. Sometimes I was so elated as to feel great transports of joy, and in these moments I could scarcely tell where I was. On one occasion, my mind was so carried out as I was meditating, that I was asked by a person that came to me, what was the matter,—“if I was ill,” I told him no, but that I was so happy, so filled with joy, that I felt the world and all things under my feet. This conversation silenced my muse, and gave me an opportunity of showing him the way of Salvation. I found great disadvantage in not being able to have my verses written out at these times, as I had to rehearse them very often, till I could get them wrote down. My mind was sometimes so dark that I could not compose a line for many days. At such seasons, I used to walk into the meadows, to pray and meditate, and found the Lord often to bless my soul. On one of these occasions, a Gentleman asked me what I was doing; he listened to my views and feelings; was much delighted, and encouraged me to persevere. In all my experience, I learnt that every good and perfect gift cometh from the Lord, and unto him be all the praise.

In January, 1837, by the blessing of God, and the assistance of friends, my poetical peices were published. Some of them were founded upon conversations respecting points of doctrine, and others upon christian experience. I endeavoured

not to offend, but some of my readers having persecuted me, I wrote that piece called God's goodness in affliction.

Having distributed some of my books in my own village, I visited others; but I cannot tell my readers what it is to travel in total darkness, amongst a strange people. I had many fears and much sorrow of heart, but I sought strength from on high, that I might be kept from the snare of the devil.

Icklingham was the first place in which I was obliged to stay all night. I felt much cast down, wept several times in the day, as I knew not where I should sleep, or what would become of me. I enquired several times for lodgings, but could not obtain any. As I was leaving the village, my boy about 9 years old, who was leading me, said, "Father the sun is going down:" I endeavoured to encourage him, though I was troubled with a thousand dismal thoughts, as we had no prospect but that of remaining abroad all night. But mercy interposed and sent Mr. Hervey, who invited me to his house, and gave me every comfort. When I found that he and his wife were members of the Wesleyan Society, "I thanked God and took courage." I went to the class and was very happy. After class we held a prayer-meeting at his house, and felt it good to be there. Truly I stand astonished at the goodness of God to me, an unworthy creature, that I should find such favour in the sight of his people.

At *Downham*, I heard Mr. Flatman preach from John xx. 20, and had a refreshing season

to my soul. The text rested upon my mind with peculiar sweetness, nor have I ever lost the influence it then produced. He announced my books, and through the kindness of friends, I was much assisted temporally, as well as spiritually. But through this hard winter, I was much tried in my temporal affairs.

I was persuaded by many, to leave of composing poetry, as I had lost my facilities for writing, by the removal of my friends ;* but a false report being raised that it was not my own, as would soon appear now, that I had lost my friends, I was obliged, in self-defence, to compose the piece at the end of this narrative.

June, 1838, the text I heard Mr. Flatman preach from several months ago, being still on my mind, I thought I would compose a poetical discourse upon it. My mind was very much enlarged, and my thoughts flowed freely, so that, if spared, I shall shortly lay it before the public. The Lord has now mercifully given me an instrument, in my little boy about 10 years old, to write down my thoughts when I wish, to preserve them.

In August, 1838, I published a narrative of my experience. After selling many copies in my own village, I went with a heavy heart to Hockwould-Cum-Wilton, but my soul was so cast down that I could hardly utter a sentence, or tell the people what I wanted. Being invited to visit a sick person, who had been bedridden a long time, I was sorely tempted to believe that I had no business there ; that my religion would

* Mr. Bangs and Mr. King were both dead.

fail me; and that the afflicted person was in possession of far richer experience than I enjoyed. I sat silent till she said, "I heard you speak in a social-meeting 3 years ago, and was so affected, that I believe, I shall have to bless God through eternity for that meeting, and I have longed to tell you of the goodness of God to me." This greatly encouraged me, and my doubts were gone, and I felt that where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. We prayed together, and the Lord pouring out his spirit upon us, my soul was so filled with the love of God, that I began, at the next cottage, to preach Christ to the people. "Lord what am I, that thou such mercy should bestow?" "I take the blessing from above, and wonder at thy boundless love." I found the distribution of my first works had been blessed to many. To the Lord be all the praise.

In March, 1839, I visited *Barningham*. I had much comfort in exhorting the people, to flee from the wrath to come, and in speaking of the sufficiency of Christ to save to the uttermost. The Lord was with us, and many said, they never spent such a Good Friday before. On the Sunday, we had a good day, and rejoiced in the Lord our God.

Since the above date, I have published and sold the *Second* Edition of my book. At Cambridge, Barnwell, Ely, Cottenham, Streatham, Lynn, and other places, which I have visited, I have met with kindness and encouragement, even beyond what I expected. Truly and thankfully I can say, "hitherto the Lord hath helped me." He hath been my strength and refuge, and a very present help in the time of need. I desire to give

myself fully to that God, who has done so much for me, whereof I am glad, so that through the remaining steps of my earthly pilgrimage, I may be guided in the right way, to that "rest that remaineth for the people of God." Truly he has brought the blind in a way that I knew not; he has led me in paths that I had not known, he has made darkness light before me, and crooked things straight. "I will sing of mercy and of judgment;" "for the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."

THE DREAM ATTEMPTED IN VERSE.

One night when on my bed I lay,
 In silent deep repose,
 That hour in which the blessed Lord,
 Does much to man disclose.
 I dream'd a dream, a dreadful dream!
 About the judgment day;
 The very thoughts of which do still,
 Fill me with sad dismay.
 Me thought 'twas in that season, when,
 The fields are white with corn,
 When o'er the plains, the thistle's down
 On gelid breeze is borne.
 When busy bees on shining wings,
 Collect their luscious store,
 Humming the field, and moor, and plain,
 And flow'ry valley o'er.
 'Twas in that season, when a friend

And I, did take a walk,
 To view the lovely landscape round,
 And have some private talk.
 The air was still, the sky serene,
 The sun shot forth his beams
 So brilliantly, the earth did glow,
 And sparkled bright the streams.
 The scene so charming round, I felt
 My breast with transport glow,
 When thus, I to my friend observ'd :
 " O what a lovely show !
 Around us, nature smiling sweet,
 I think I never saw
 A scene so fair, a day so fine,
 Since first I breath did draw."
 " Behold the whole creation smiles,
 In full, in rich perfection ;
 As if it strove to yield the eye,
 Delectable reflection."
 'Twas then about the hour of noon,
 The sky was bright and clear ;
 When lo ! a thunder-clap I heard,
 Which shook my soul with fear.
 Peal after peal along the south,
 Successively did roll ;
 The sky was black, and light'ning streams,
 Flash'd bright from pole to pole,
 Thick were the clouds : like ocean waves
 They roll'd in dreadful ire,
 As o'er the terror-stricken earth,
 They pour'd the living fire.
 The earth below from side to side,
 One conflagration spread ;
 And O how heav'd my lab'ring breast,
 With terror and with dread.

I sought a place to hide me in,
 But none was to be found ;
 The buildings all beside me were,
 Laid level with the ground.
 In torrents fell the liquid fire,
 From heav'n's volcanic womb
 While I in expectation stood,
 To hear my final doom.
 Afraid lest I should be consign'd,
 To everlasting death ;
 Black terrors crowded on my sight,
 And almost chok'd my breath.
 I look'd and lo ; th' Archangel came,
 The trumpet in his hand ;
 Behind a host of horsemen too,
 Was waiting his command.
 The trumpet he began to sound,
 And cried "the Judge is come,"
 Then dreadful was the awful noise,
 Which shook the crakling dome.
 The Judge then in the west appear'd,
 Upon his burning throne :
 His countenance more dazling bright,
 Than sun at mid-day shone.
 Celestial streams of glory play'd
 Around his burning brow ;
 His hair was like the finest wool,
 His garment white as snow.
 Now o'er the north another host,
 Of armed horsemen rode ;
 Prepar'd to pour down vengeance on,
 The enemies of God.
 Confusion reign'd o'er all the earth,
 That still intensely burn'd ;
 The sun was set in endless night,

The moon to blood was turn'd.
 The dead now rose, a multitude,
 Illimitably vast :
 The righteous rose with looks of joy,
 The wicked shrunk aghast !
 The righteous now by angels hail'd,
 And borne by them above
 Those radiant bounds of mortal sight,
 To realms of joy and love.
 The wicked shook with manic rage,
 And with convulsive ire ;
 They gnash'd their teeth, well knowing they,
 Must dwell in quenchless fire.
 Beside them stood the hellish crew,
 And mock'd their groans and cries ;
 While fierce despair their bosoms tore,
 And terror glaz'd their eyes.
 Too conscious of their deep-dy'd guilt,
 Like frantic maniacs they
 Before their dread Creator stood,
 And trembled with dismay.
 Now as th' assembling saints conven'd,
 To mount the upper sky,
 Methought, I did a friend of mine
 Amongst the troops espy.
 Whom, when I saw, my flutt'ring heart,
 My gladness did betray ;
 But ah, alas ! he merely look'd,
 Then swiftly sped away.
 To God I then a pray'r did breathe,
 That he would me regard :
 And snatch me from the pit of hell,
 Which graciously he heard.
 He raised me up unto his throne,
 From whence he could discry,

The whole creation's ample round,
 That stretch'd from sky to sky.
 'Twas then my heart was fill'd with joy,
 O that it yet were so !
 While solemn silence did prevail,
 Throughout the ranks below.
 " 'Tis finished now " the Judge did say,
 At whose dread voice, the earth
 Assunder rent, when like a stream
 Of sulphur issued forth
 A boiling mass ; upon whose brink,
 The wicked trembling stood,
 As conscious of their certain fate,
 In that deep fiery flood.
 " Depart from me " th' Almighty spoke,
 That moment down they fell ;
 While yelling devils welcom'd them,
 Into that gulph of hell.
 The vengeful earth upon them clos'd,
 And hid them from my view ;
 While midst the loud rejoicing saints,
 The throne it upward flew :
 Heav'ns golden portals open'd wide,
 And quickly it receiv'd ;
 And all those soul's who savingly,
 On Jesus Christ believ'd.
 Then O what glories met my sight,
 What raptures fill'd my soul !
 Raptures divine that ever through
 The breasts of seraphs roll.
 But words and language all must fail,
 To tell what there I saw ;
 An Angel's pencil won't suffice
 That glorious scene to draw.

AN ADDRESS,

Occasioned by certain individuals who asserted the vice
and poems were not my own.

A real Christian would disdain,
To cause me grief, to give me pain,
A blind, a helpless man :
But rather would he do me good,
Feed, clothe, and help me on the road,
To new Jerusalem.

But some there are so dead to shame,
They strive to rob me of my fame ;
Disseminating lies :
Oh God ! do thou them all forgive,
Shew them the truth, that they may live
Before thee, and be wise.

The Lord was pleas'd to shew to me,
What the great final day would be,
In vision of the night :
Let now my conduct testify
Whether it is a truth, or lie,
That I have dar'd to write.

Can demonstrations be more clear,
Than what does unto them appear,
Who did me know so well :
When I the paths of vice pursu'd,
And carnal pleasure ever woo'd,
Proceeding down to hell ?

If old grown sinners dare deny
The mighty builder of the sky,
The miracles he wrought :

Their judgements surely must be had,
 They must be blind, they must be mad,
 'To cherish such a thought.

O God illumine their inward sight
 And guide them to the "realms of light,"
 Where saints are gone before :
 For there the lame, the dumb, the blind,
 Do all in Christ a welcome find,
 Although they may be poor.

The Church of God, is with the poor,
 Though some may think they are no more
 Than scum upon the earth :
 But I may praise God's holy name
 And make his word my constant theme,
 As long as I have breath.

The potent of the earth may strive—
 But woe to ev'ry man alive,
 Who fights against his God :
 Those who oppress the needy poor
 Or seek to drive him from their door,
 Are guilty of his blood.

See Lazarus the afflicted saint,
 For want of food, so weak and faint,
 Laid at the rich man's gate :
 Desiring but the crumbs of bread
 Contended, if he might be fed
 With what the dogs did eat.

The dogs moreover lick'd his sores—
 The blood still oozing from the pores
 Of his pain-stricken frame :
 But soon as he gave up the ghost,
 Then borne by the Angelic host,
 He dwelt with Abraham.

The rich man worldly splendour had,
 With purple and fine linen clad,

Far'd sumptuous ev'ry day :
 But ah, alas ! he sickens, dies—
 In hell, he lifted up his eyes—

Too late began to pray ;

Too late began to see and feel
 Almighty God his wrath reveal,

In that accurs'd abyss :
 Safely reclined on Abraham's breast,
 Laz'rus has gained eternal rest,
 In pure and perfect bliss.

Lest this your awful case should be
 To dwell through all eternity,
 In horrid black despair ;

O seek the Lord with all your heart
 And from your evil ways depart,
 Seek him by fervent pray'r.

O seek him while he may be found,
 Yea, while you are on praying ground,
 Where you may be forgiven ;

O do not now his goodness slight,
 For he can wash the Ethiop white,
 And cleanse the vile for Heav'n.





